

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /119 W
----- 055081

R 221130Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 394

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MI, TZ

SUBJ: GOM REACTS AGAINST DAR NEWS ARTICLE

1. SUMMARY: MINOR FUROR ERUPTED IN MALAWI PARLIAMENT MAR 21 OVER DAR DAILY NEWS ARTICLE FEB 28. GOM INTERPRETS ARTICLE, WHICH FOLLOWED RECENT GOM MINISTERIAL DELEGATION VISIT DAR, AS IMPLYING MALAWI DELINQUENT IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND THEREFORE DESIROUS OF STUDYING UJAMAA SYSTEM. STRONG REACTION OF GOM MINISTERS MAY CAUSE TEMPORARY PAUSE IN PROCESS OF IMPROVING RELATIONS BETWEEN MALAWI AND TANZANIA. END SUMMARY.

2. IN MALAWI PARLIAMENT MAR 21 FINANCE MINISTER MATENJE TOOK STRONG CATEGORICAL EXCEPTION TO DAR DAILY NEWS ARTICLE ENTITLED "MALAWI PLANS BETTER STANDARDS OF LIVING FOR RURAL AREAS." MINISTER SAID WORDS "MALAWI PLANS" INDICATED NOTHING HAD BEEN DONE IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT SINCE 1964 AND IMPLIED MALAWI DEL HAD COME TO LEARN FROM TANZANIAN SYSTEM. ON CONTRARY, MATENJE INSISTED, IT WAS TANZANIANS WHO HAVE BEEN COMING TO MALAWI TO LEARN. MINISTER FOR YOUTH CHAKUAMBA PHIRI DESCRIBED ARTICLE AS "INSULT" TO MALAWI INTEGRITY AND STRESSED MALAWI HAS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO LEARN FROM TANZANIAN EXAMPLE.

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CHAKUAMBA ALSO UNDERLINED MALAWI'S STEADY IMPROVEMENT IN LOT

OF VILLAGER AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN AGRICULTURE TO POINT OF EXPORTING SURPLUSES. CHAKUAMBA, DEPICTING ARTICLE'S AUTHOR (SIMEON ILETA) AS "COMMUNIST-ORIENTED," FURTHER STATED THAT IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORS DOES NOT MEAN MALAWI HAS CHANGED FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD SOUTH AFRICA, MOZAMBIQUE AND RHODESIA. SEVERAL OTHER MINISTERS ROSE TO VOICE SIMILAR THEMES INCLUDING MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO GADAMA WHO STATED MALAWI DOES NOT BELIEVE IN SOCIALIST POLICIES AND HAS NEVER STATED SO AT ANY TIME. FULL COVERAGE OF DEBATE CARRIED IN BLANTYRE DAILY TIMES MAR 22.

3. MINISTER FOR SOUTHERN REGION CHIWANDA GAMA IN CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR MAR 21 EMPHASIZED IRRITATION OF GOM OVER DAR ARTICLE.

4. COMMENT: OBVIOUSLY COORDINATED PARLIAMENTARY REACTION INDICATES PRESIDENT BANDA PROBABLY TOOK PERSONAL EXCEPTION TO ARTICLE AND INSISTED MINISTERS PUBLICLY PUT THINGS STRAIGHT. MALAWI IS PROUD OF OWN RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND SENSITIVE TO ANY IMPLICATION HOWEVER FARFETCHED IT MAY CONSIDER EMULATING TANZANIA'S SOCIALIST APPROACH ON FOREIGN POLICIES. WHILE WE DOUBT ISSUE WILL PROVIDE MORE THAN TEMPORARY PAUSE IN PROCESS OF IMPROVING MALAWI-TANZANIA RELATIONS, EPISODE UNDERLINES EXTENT TO WHICH STATE OF IMPROVEMENT IS STILL FRAGILE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PROPAGANDA, PRESS COMMENTS, DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS INTERRUPTION, FOREIGN RELATIONS, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, URBAN DEVELOPMENT, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 MAR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BLANTY00394
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740061-1002
From: BLANTYRE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740324/aaaaavtc.tel
Line Count: 86
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 JUN 2002 by rowelle0>; APPROVED <03 JUL 2002 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GOM REACTS AGAINST DAR NEWS ARTICLE
TAGS: PFOR, MI, TZ
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005